

FOREIGN DEPARTMENT

IN CHARGE OF
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AN ANCIENT GREEK SANITARIUM

THOSE who, interested in things pertaining to the care of the sick, travel in Southern Europe and inquire into ancient history and legend, will find that both history and legend bring them up to the mystic name of Æsculapius (as it is called in Italy) or Asclepios (as it is called in Greece). We mentioned not long ago the temple of Æsculapius, which was established on an island in the Tiber where a Roman hospital now stands, but to meet Asclepios himself one must go on to Greece, a land of many and varied enchantments. Asclepios was, according to mythology, a son of Apollo, who was the god of medicine and healing. His daughter was Hygeia, and his sign was the sacred serpent, emblem of wisdom. He was a physician and surgeon of such wonderful powers that it was said that he was finally struck by lightning and killed by Zeus (the greatest of the gods), who became jealous of the way in which Asclepios restored the dead and dying to life. He had two sons who were great surgeons, who went with the Greek army to the Trojan war as military surgeons.

Whoever goes to Constantinople and visits the Imperial Ottoman Museum will see, in the room where the relics are gathered which were excavated by Dr. Schliemann at Troy, a small collection of surgical instruments looking very much like our own—a bistoury, some forceps, a little curette with probe handle; these, no doubt, were used by the sons of Asclepios, who must undoubtedly have been a real physician, and to whom we must now return.

There were many shrines and temples erected in Greece to Asclepios, but the most interesting of all was at Epidaurus, where there was, long before the Christian era, a most complete and magnificent sanitarium, with a hospital for the sick, hotels for their friends or for patients, gymnasium, baths, gardens, temples for sacrifices and religious rites, and a beautiful "temple of Asclepios," which we, of course, may feel certain must have been the great physician's private office.

Enough of the ruins of all these buildings remain for one to judge perfectly how fine they must have been in ancient times. They were built

entirely of white marble, and set on a spacious plain high above the sea and surrounded by a most beautiful circle of hills, which even yet are quite richly wooded and were probably in the ancient times thickly covered with pines—an ideal site for a sanitarium and health resort. On the side of one hill was a large Greek theatre, still in an excellent state of preservation, and in the gymnasium, which (according to the books) was a Greek building, are the well-preserved remains of a small Roman theatre. No doubt this was built especially for the patients' amusement after their gymnastic exercises had been taken.

The hospital must have been beautiful. Nothing of it remains in place now but the foundations and door-sills, but by these outlines one can see that it was an enormous square, or nearly square, building, divided into small rooms, just the right size for private patients, which opened into colonnades or courts. Most interesting also are the remains of the gymnasium and the bath-houses, and of the ancient water-pipe system. In several places one can still see the water-pipes, which were made of earthenware in vase-shaped sections, one fitted into the other.

The archæologists have found many large stone slabs on which are inscribed records of the cases and their cures. From these it is quite plain that hydrotherapy was well developed and that surgical operations were performed sometimes.

No mention of nurses can we glean from these old histories, though there is plenty about priests. But we know that where there were hydrotherapy and surgery there must have been nurses of some kind, be they called priests or what not, and one can easily imagine them, dressed in the beautiful white drapery of the Greek statues, going every morning to take their orders at the temple of Asclepios.

Many remains are seen of semicircular marble seats, like glorified park benches, which were placed about in the grounds for the patients to sit on.

In the museums are many fragments of the old buildings, pieces of columns, votive offerings given by grateful patients, statues of sick people, etc., but only one which has a distinctly medical character, this being a marble slab on which is carved a small bag which looks exactly like a surgeon's hand-bag of to-day, only rather smaller, and a scale with weights and measures. Of this slab, unfortunately, no photograph is to be found.

The trip to Epidaurus is made by carriage from Nauplia, taking an early start, six or half-past six in the morning, and returning by evening. Lunch is carried and set out by the concierge in a little summer-house on the hill beside the theatre. He provides wine, condiments, etc., and in the afternoon serves coffee and Greek confections under the trees in front



HYGEIA



STREET, LEADING TO
ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

Charles E. Plummer

of the museum. The spring is the time to go, as one then receives the most delightful impressions of what this famous old health resort must have been like to the sick who repaired to it.

The most complete collection of photographs of Epidaurus is that of the English Photograph Co., Beck's book-store, Constitution Square, Athens. He will send English and French catalogues, and photographs may be ordered by mail.

The Greek Archæological Society will before long issue a new edition of a book by P. Cavadias, written in French and called "Fouilles d'Epidaure," which will give a complete account of all discoveries, up to the latest, made in the excavations at Epidaurus. This book will show photographs of the slabs which bear the inscriptions describing the cases and their treatment, and will also, no doubt, give translations of the same.

ITEMS

THERE was a very brilliant ceremony at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in midsummer, when the King laid the foundation-stone for the new buildings which are to be erected on the grounds of this ancient and most admirable and interesting of historic hospitals. About three thousand people witnessed the scene, which was brilliant and impressive. The stone was laid near the site given in 1123 by Henry I. The Queen, who was made a governor of the hospital, had the "charge" of ancient times read to her as follows: "Your Majesty having been elected and chosen a governor of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, it is your duty and charge to acquit yourself in that office with all faithfulness and sincerity, endeavoring that the affairs and business of the said hospital may be well ordered and managed, and promoting the weal and advantage of the poor wounded, sick, maimed, diseased persons harbored in the said hospital. To this end your Majesty is now admitted a governor." A pleasant account of the whole day appeared in the *League News* of St. Bart's Nurses for July. The patients who were carried out to see the ceremonies, it said, declared that they had never had such a grand day.

THE School Nurses in London, who were established some six years ago by Miss Honnor Morten, at that time a member of the School Board, have been supported since then by a voluntary society. They have so signally demonstrated their usefulness that they have now been taken over by the London County Council and established as municipal officers. They are to be under the direction of the medical officer of the Public Health Department, and the staff has been increased to twelve, at

salaries beginning at eighty pounds and rising to ninety (about four hundred to four hundred and fifty dollars).

The Education Boards of Brighton and Widnes, near Liverpool, have also recently secured the services of "Queen's Nurses" for their schools.

So the movement of introducing the nurse into the public schools goes on steadily, for the school authorities now realize that it improves the average attendance of the children.

THE British Medical Association at its meeting in Oxford in July passed a resolution approving of the principle of registration, and directed that it be sent to the select committee of the House of Commons. This will, no doubt, be of substantial support to the registration cause.



ASEPTIC CATHETERIZATION.—The *Journal of the American Medical Association* in an abstract of a paper in the *Medical Press* says: "The authors consider the sterilization of catheters, the preparation of the urinary canal, and the introduction of the instruments in an aseptic manner. They detail a large series of experiments with infected catheters and summarize those methods of sterilization which prove to be safe and simple as follows: 1. Soft rubber catheters are rendered sterile by being boiled for five minutes, preferably in sodium chlorid solution, care being taken that the solution fills the lumen of the catheter. As a matter of precaution the catheter should be washed with soap spirits and running water after use. 2. Hard rubber and silk and cotton woven catheters should be boiled five minutes in a saturated solution of sulphate of ammonia. Each instrument should be wrapped separately in gauze or a towel, or, if several catheters are to be sterilized, in such a manner that their surfaces shall not come in contact with the sides of the vessel or other catheters. 3. Ureter catheters can be folded and wrapped in a towel so that their surfaces are kept apart and boiled for five minutes in a saturated solution of ammonium sulphate. 4. Cystoscopes should be sterilized by first washing them in soap spirits and water, then vigorously rubbing them for two minutes with two different pieces of gauze or cotton wet with soap spirits, and then with alcohol, for one minute. The channel of the catheter can be cleansed by means of a brush, first brushing with soap spirits and then with alcohol. Instruments can be kept aseptic if they are snugly wrapped in a piece of gauze or towel wet with soap spirits."